



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

May 17, 2005

# News Release

## **SOUTH TEXAS DETENTION COMPLEX OPENING TODAY**

*State-of-the art facility has capacity to house 1,020 ICE detainees*

PEARSALL, Texas — The country's largest contract detention facility to house U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) detainees is opening today with a ribbon-cutting and formal ceremony here.

The state-of-the-art South Texas Detention Complex (STDC) can accommodate more than 1,000 ICE detainees and includes a 67-person hospital with the latest medical and dental facilities on site staffed by Public Health Service employees. The hospital facility includes four zero-atmosphere rooms to ensure that contagious diseases are contained.

“This is an incredible facility that sets a new standard for excellence,” said Marc Moore, field office director for the ICE San Antonio field office. “ICE remains steadfast in our commitment to provide a safe, humane and secure environment for all individuals entrusted to our care.” Moore heads ICE Detention and Removal Operations for 53 south central Texas counties, which includes the cities of: San Antonio, Austin, Brownsville, Del Rio, Laredo and McAllen.

With various dorm pod sizes to accommodate different group make ups, the facility can accommodate men in eight pods of 64 and four pods of 32. Another 150 women can be housed in three pods of 40 and two pods of 20. Each dorm pod has a separate secure outdoor exercise area. STDC also contains a high-risk two-story dorm pod.

Another feature of the new 238,000-sq.ft. detention facility is a modern kitchen where meals for the prisoners and staff are prepared daily. However, unlike prisons in old movies which show large congregations of prisoners during mealtime, there's no single cafeteria where detainees eat in this complex. As a security measure, meals are delivered to the detainees in their segregated pods.

“The dorm pod is a key feature to modern detention design,” said Moore. “Since the dorm pod is essentially self contained, there’s no mass collection of detainees that could create a security problem. Instead, detainees are separated into manageable groups in the dorm-pod system. It’s safer for the security guards, and safer for the detainees.”

The facility is also designed to be self-sufficient in the event that utilities are interrupted. For example, STDC has its own half-million-gallon fresh-water tank.

The South Texas Detention Complex is a contract detention facility owned and operated by Correctional Services Corp. (CSC). CSC has a \$1.9 million five-year contract to operate the facility.

CSC will provide 268 contract guards and personnel to operate the facility; ICE will provide a staff of 68. STDC will serve the 53 counties with the ICE San Antonio area of operation, which also includes supporting the Del Rio, Laredo and McAllen U.S. Border Patrol sectors, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Field Operations, the San Antonio Office of Investigations and two U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services offices.

The detention facility grand opening was the culmination of years of planning by the now defunct U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. The project continued with the transition to the Department of Homeland Security, and is now administered by the ICE San Antonio Field Office of Detention and Removal Operations.

As other ICE DRO detention facilities, the South Texas Detention Complex houses and cares for criminal and non-criminal aliens. Among its population at any given time could be individuals who have information needed to defend and /or protect the United States from terrorists or terrorist acts.

This self-contained facility also houses four immigration courtrooms, which includes a video teleconferencing capability for holding immigration hearings for detainees held off-site. This VTC availability helps expedite the removal process of the detainees, and cuts down on travel requirements which saves tax dollars overall.

The primary mission of ICE Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) is to promote public safety and national security by ensuring the departure of all removable aliens from the U.S through the fair enforcement of the nation’s immigration laws. DRO locates and arrests fugitive aliens; detains certain aliens while their cases are being processed; and removes aliens from the U.S. when so ordered.

The ICE officer-in-charge of the South Texas Detention Complex is Supervisory Detention Officer Jay Sparks, who previously acted as the assistant field office director in charge of the ICE Harlingen field office. In this position, Sparks also oversaw the ICE Port Isabel (Texas) Detention Facility. The STDC warden is Edward Perez, employed by Correctional Services Corp. Perez is a former Three Rivers Federal Prison warden.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*